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**European Forestry Commission matters (Food and  
Agriculture Organization): Forestry activities of the Food and  
Agriculture Organization Regional Office for Europe and  
Central Asia**

**Forty-second session**

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**Forestry activities of the Food and Agriculture Organization  
of the United Nations Regional Office for Europe and Central  
Asia****Note by the Secretariat***Summary*

The purpose of this paper which was prepared by Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) is to summarise the on-going and planned forestry activities of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia (REU), together with regional work planning and priorities. Members may wish to review ongoing and planned work and provide guidance.



## I. Introduction

1. The European and Central Asian countries represent very diverse characteristics in terms of climatic, social and economic conditions. These have an important impact on forest and other wooded lands. In Europe and Central Asia region, particularly Eastern and Southeast Europe, as well as Central Asia rural areas are still agriculturally important and under human influence for millennia. Fuelwood harvesting and logging at unsustainable levels, grazing, fires, mining and urban development have, in certain degrees, impacted forest ecosystems' integrity. Moreover, impacts of climate change, such as increased frequency of droughts and sinking of groundwater levels are predicted to further accelerate, and changes in species and their composition may further threaten the stability of forest ecosystems in the region. Central Asia and Caucasus have low forest cover and low forest growth. Fuelwood gathering and grazing lead to deforestation and continued forest degradation in particular in Central Asia but also in Eastern and Southeast Europe. Land degradation and desertification exacerbated by climate change are serious issues, mainly because of inappropriate agricultural practices.

2. Stemming from the regional priorities as approved by the 33rd Regional Conference for Europe<sup>1</sup>, the FAO REU and the FAO Sub-regional Office for Central Asia (SEC) have been supporting countries in their efforts to manage forest resources sustainably in the region through relevant forestry programmes and operational work under the FAO Strategic Objectives, the REU Regional Initiatives and the relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDG).

## II. Regional work programme in FAO's Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia for the biennium 2022-2023

3. A new Strategic Framework 2022–2031<sup>2</sup> and Medium-Term Plan 2022-2025<sup>3</sup>, both approved at the 42nd session of the FAO Conference in June 2021, are in place as of 2022 to support the 2030 Agenda through the transformation to more efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable, agri-food systems for better production, better nutrition, a better environment, and a better life, leaving no one behind.

4. At the regional level, the Regional Conference for Europe (ERC) formulates regional positions on global policy and regulatory issues, advises on and identifies specific problems of the European and Central Asia region as well as agrees on priorities of FAO's work in agriculture, fisheries and forestry in the Europe and Central Asia region. These agreed regional priorities should be considered in the preparation of planning, programme and budget documents of the Organization. The ERC at its 33rd Session in 2022 endorsed the following four priorities for the Region:

(a) Formulating effective policies, promoting digital innovation and facilitating rural livelihoods, with emphasis on smallholders, women and youth

(b) Food system transformation and support in exploring new markets through the alignment of trade, food safety and sanitary and phytosanitary policies to meet WTO commitments and promote value chain development

(c) Promoting sustainable natural resource management and facilitating resilience in agriculture, forestry and other land-use sectors, including mitigating and adapting to climate change, and

(d) Addressing food insecurity and reduction of all forms of malnutrition.

5. To implement these priorities, the Region has three revised regional initiatives focusing on empowering smallholders, family farms and youth through inclusive rural transformation, digitalization and innovation (RI-1); transforming food systems and

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<sup>1</sup> Report of the 33rd Regional Conference for Europe <https://www.fao.org/3/nj289en/nj289en.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> Strategic Framework 2022–2031 <http://www.fao.org/3/ne577en/ne577en.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> Medium-Term Plan 2022-2025 <http://www.fao.org/3/ne576en/ne576en.pdf>.

facilitating market access and integration (RI-2); and managing natural resources sustainably and preserving biodiversity in a changing climate (RI-3). The latter responds to the urgent need to cope with the challenges of climate change as part of the Paris Agreement and emphasizes the cross-cutting nature of climate change and biodiversity. These regional priorities and initiatives are reflected in the FAO Programme of Work and Budget for the Region and ensure a programmatic approach addressing regional priorities and supporting the implementation of country programmes by mobilizing the Organization's technical work across the Twenty Programme Priority Areas (PPAs). FAO will also apply four cross-cutting/cross-sectional "accelerators": (i) technology, (ii) innovation, (iii) data, and (iv) complements (governance, human capital, and institutions) in all its programmatic interventions to accelerate impact while minimizing trade-offs.

6. In addition, the Regional Initiatives allow to better respond to country demand and to develop the Country Programming Framework (CPF) in an integrated manner, as well as increase the impact of interventions and their contribution to achieving the SDGs. FAO's work in the country is determined by the CPF which defines the agreed thematic areas and activities for cooperation between FAO and the respective Government; as well as the Country Work Plans (CWP) which operationalize in the medium term the agreed outcomes as stated in the CPF and UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (UNSDCF).

7. REU forestry work includes the following priorities:

(a) Ensure sustainable use and management of wood and non-wood forest resources through providing support to member countries in assessing and monitoring forest/tree and wildlife resources with due consideration to biodiversity conservation.

(b) Strengthen country capacity to deal with increasing threats posed by movement of pest and invasive species through expanded international trade coupled with local climatic change, and to implement the Guide to implementation of phytosanitary standards in forestry and other associated forest health guides.

(c) Strengthen country capacity to assess and monitor climate change impacts on forests and land resources, to restore degraded forest and landscapes, and support countries to adapt to climate change and mitigate its impact.

8. In line with the priorities REU has been organising or supporting:

(a) The annual meeting of the Forest Invasive Species Network for Europe and Central Asia (REUFIS) on Monitoring of native and introduced saproxylic (bark and wood boring) insects for effective prevention and management, 27-30 June 2022, Sopron, Hungary.

(b) A joint UNECE-FAO-UNDP meeting on Building urban and peri-urban tree and forest resilience, 6 – 8 December 2022, Budapest, Hungary.

(c) FAO's Regional Technical Platform on Green Agriculture.

(d) A technical meeting on Guideline for development and implementation of national forest biosecurity strategies, systems and processes, 27-31 March 2023, Rome, Italy.

(e) A study tour under the TCP/RER/3801 project on good forest management practices to reduce the impacts of outbreaks of bark beetles, 5-7 June 2023, Bavaria, Germany.

(f) The Annual meeting of the Forest Invasive Species Network for Europe and Central Asia (REUFIS) on Digital solutions for better forest health monitoring in Europe and Central Asia, 26-28 June 2023, Sopron, Hungary.

(g) The development of a pocket guide to monitor important bark and wood boring forest insects in Europe and Central Asia. The guide should be available by the end of 2023.

(h) A Letter of Agreement on the preparation of guidelines on forest biodiversity monitoring methodologies in the sub-region for Central Asia and providing associated training for different target groups of stakeholders

(i) A Letter of Agreement on the preparation of guidelines on the implementation of Nature-based Solutions (NbSs) to combat negative impact of climate change on forestry for the sub-region for Central Asia and providing associated training

(j) The operationalization of projects within FAO-Türkiye Forestry Partnership Programme (FTFP).

(k) A Letter of Agreement has been implemented with the Regional Centre for Forestry and Rural Development (REFORD) in North Macedonia on “In-depth study on use of non-wood forest products (NWFPs) in selected Western Balkan countries” between December 2021 and September 2022.

(l) FAO organised a national workshop in Türkiye on 20 September which identified priorities to further upscale the contribution of NWFP to food security, nutrition and livelihoods in Türkiye as well as in regional processes, in which Türkiye is involved. The regional workshop on the NWFPs is scheduled for the next year.

9. The vast majority of FAO technical assistance has been provided through FAO implemented projects, either provided through FAO Regular Programme funds under FAO’s Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP) or through Extra-budgetary programme funds, mainly the Government Cooperative Programme (GCP) funds or Unilateral Trust Funds (UTF).

10. The following projects have been implemented or are under development by Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia. Detailed information about on-going and planned national, sub-regional projects is given under the Annex. Further information about the projects and other regional forestry work will be provided in the EFC session in November.

11. List of FAO projects in the region including completed, on-going and planned projects in the reporting period.

Project Symbol	Project title	Country/Region	Duration	Total Budget, USD	Notes
<b>NATIONAL PROJECTS</b>					
TCP/ARM/3703/C2	TCPF: Technical Assistance on Preparation of the full funding proposal on GCF	Armenia	01-Aug-2019 - 30-Nov-2021	40,000	Financially Closed
TCP/ARM/3801/C1	TCPF: Technical Support for Revision of the National Forest Policy and Strategic framework	Armenia	19-Mar-2020 - 10-Mar-2022	32,000	Financially Closed
TCP/ARM/3807	Assistance for establishing the National Forest Monitoring and Assessment System	Armenia	26-Jan-2022 - 31-Dec-2023	205,000	ONGOING
GCP/ARM/008/GCF	Forest resilience of Armenia, enhancing adaptation and rural green growth via mitigation	Armenia	04-Nov-2021 - 03-Nov-2029	10,000,000	ONGOING
GCP/ARM/012/AUS	Forest resilience of Armenia, enhancing adaptation and rural green growth via mitigation	Armenia	04-Nov-2021 - 03-Nov-2029	1,631,542	ONGOING
GCP/AZE/004/GFF	Conservation and Sustainable use of Biodiversity: Strengthening network of protected areas through advanced governance and management (FSP)	Azerbaijan	01-Jul-2021 - 30-Jun-2026	2,639,726	ONGOING
GCP/AZE/007/GFF	Forest Resources Assessment and Monitoring to Strengthen Forestry Policy and	Azerbaijan	01-Oct-2017 - 31-Dec-2021	1,484,247	Financially Closed

	Knowledge Framework (MSP)				
TCP/AZE/3802/C1	TCPF: Integrating pollinators into Sustainable Forest Management Plans	Azerbaijan	01-Jul-2021 - 31-May-2023	50,000	Operationally Closed
TCP/AZE/3901/C1	TCPF: Strengthen capacities and information base for the management of key forest pests and diseases	Azerbaijan	01-Nov-2022 - 31-May-2024	75,000	ONGOING
TCP/BIH/3802/C2	TCPF: Potentials of fast-growing plantation forests	Bosnia and Herzegovina	01-Sep-2021 - 31-Aug-2023	63,000	ONGOING
GCP/KOS/007/SWE	Support to strengthening sustainable and multipurpose forest management to improve rural livelihoods and address climate change in Kosovo <sup>4</sup>	Kosovo	01-Sep-2019 - 31-Aug-2023	2,448,731	ONGOING
GCP/KOS/008/EC	Support to strengthening sustainable and multipurpose forest management to improve rural livelihoods and address climate change in Kosovo	Kosovo	01-Jan-2022 - 31-Dec-2023	1,691,400	ONGOING
UTF/KOS/006/KOS	Complementary support to Implementation of the Forest Policy and Strategy in Kosovo	Kosovo	01-Sep-2016 - 31-Dec-2023	210,829	ONGOING
GCP/KYR/020/GCF	Carbon Sequestration through Climate Investment in Forests and Rangelands	Kyrgyzstan	25-Oct-2022 - 25-Oct-2030	29,988,520	ONGOING
GCP/KYR/744064/GFF	Integrated water resources management for the restoration of agro-woodlands in the Syrdarya River basin	Kyrgyzstan	June 2024-May 2028	3,500,000	Active pipeline, under development
TCP/MOL/3702/C1	TCPF: Developing the institutional capacity of the National Forestry Agency in the preparation of NFI	Moldova	06-May-2019 - 31-Dec-2021	60,000	Financially Closed
TCP/MOL/3705/C3	TCPF: Promoting sustainable and climate resilient management of natural resources	Moldova	01-Nov-2020 - 31-Dec-2021	52,000	Financially Closed
TCP/MOL/3806	Formulation of a GCF project proposal on climate change adaptation and mitigation in forestry	Moldova	01-Jan-2022 - 31-Dec-2023	325,000	ONGOING
TCP/MNE/745169	Technical assistance for Sustainable Forest Management in Montenegro	Montenegro	02-Oct-2023 - 15-Dec-2024	140,000	Pipeline, under development
TCP/MCD/3903	TCPF: Technical Assistance for strengthening the national capacity of the forest service	North Macedonia	15-Jul-2023 - 31-Dec-2024	100,000	ONGOING

<sup>4</sup> References to Kosovo shall be understood in the context of United Nations Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

GCP/SRB/002/GFF	Contribution of sustainable forest management to a low emission and resilient development in Serbia (FSP)	Serbia	19-Feb-2018 - 30-Jun-2023	3,274,659	Activities Completed
GCP/SRB/007P/GFF	Forest and landscape restoration (FLR) to achieve Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) - (PPG)	Serbia	01-Nov-2021 - 31-Dec-2022	50,000	Activities Completed
GCP/SRB/007/GFF	Enabling environment at policy, field and market levels for Forest Landscape Restoration (FLR) to achieve Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) in Serbia	Serbia	01-Apr-2022 - 31-Mar-2025	746,121	ONGOING
TCP/SRB/3801/C1	TCPF: Forest Resilience to CC and BD loss via mitigation and adaptation investments	Serbia	01-Apr-2021 - 31-Mar-2023	81,000	Financially Closed
TCP/SRB/3902/C2	TCPF: Enhancing the resilience of Serbian forests and their carbon storage potential	Serbia	15-Jan-2023 - 14-Jan-2024	95,000	ONGOING
GCP/SRB/008/GCF	Enhancing the resilience of Serbian forests to ensure energy security of the most vulnerable while contributing to their livelihoods and carbon sequestration	Serbia	01-Jan-2024 - 31-Dec-2031	15,000,000	Pipeline, under development
GCP/SEC/024/TUR	Enhancing of the Capacity of the International Forestry Training Centre	Türkiye	02-May-2022 - 05-May-2025	1,000,000	ONGOING
UTF/TUR/067/TUR	Development of Feasibility Study and Env. and Social Inst. for the Bolaman Basin Rehabilitation Project	Türkiye	01-Jul-2020 - 30-Jun-2022	370,238	Financially Closed
UTF/TUR/068/TUR	Development of Feasibility Study and Environmental and Social Instruments for the Cekerek Basin Rehabilitation Project	Türkiye	11-Sep-2020 - 30-Jun-2022	370,073	Financially Closed
GCP/TUR/055/GFF	Sustainable Land Management and Climate Friendly Agriculture (FSP)	Türkiye	04-Sep-2015 - 28-Feb-2023	5,750,000	Activities Completed
GCP/TUR/061/GFF	Conservation and Sustainable Management of Türkiye's Steppe Ecosystems (FSP)	Türkiye	15-Jan-2017 - 31-Dec-2022	2,328,767	Operationally Closed
GCP/TUR/904/GFF	Strengthening the Conservation of Biodiversity and Sustainable Management of Forest Landscapes in Türkiye's Kazdaglari Region	Türkiye	25-Oct-2022 - 25-Oct-2027	4,657,534	ONGOING
TCP/TUR/3902/C2	TCPF: Post-Fire Restoration Activities of Forest and Maquis Ecosystems in Mugla Province	Türkiye	15-Dec-2022 - 31-Mar-2024	55,000	ONGOING

GCP/UZB/004/GFF	Sustainable management of forests in Mountain and Valley areas in Uzbekistan (FSP)	Uzbekistan	01-Mar-2018 - 28-Feb-2025	3,187,023	ONGOING
TCP/UZB/744627	Supporting readiness and effectiveness of RESILAND project	Uzbekistan	15-Jul-2023 – 31-Dec-2024	50,000	Pipeline, under development
<b>REGIONAL PROJECTS</b>					
MTF/SEC/012/UOG	Central Asian Desert Initiative - Conservation and adaptive use of cold winter deserts in CA	Regional Kazakhstan Turkmenistan Uzbekistan	01-Aug-2017 - 30-Jun-2022	1,464,071	Financially Closed
GCP/SEC/021/TUR	Forest Restoration Improvement for Environmental Development and Sustainability (FRIENDS)	Azerbaijan Kazakhstan Kyrgyzstan SEC - Subregional Office for Central Asia, Ankara Uzbekistan	01-Apr-2022 - 31-Mar-2025	2,000,000	ONGOING
GCP/SEC/025/TUR	Improving Biodiversity and Sustainable Forestry	Regional Azerbaijan Kazakhstan Kyrgyzstan Montenegro SEC - Subregional Office for Central Asia, Ankara Tajikistan Türkiye Turkmenistan Uzbekistan	01-Sep-2023 - 31-Aug-2026	3,299,962	ONGOING
GCP/SEC/293/GFF	Integrated natural resources management in drought-prone and salt-affected agricultural production landscapes in Central Asia and Türkiye (CACILM2)	Regional Kazakhstan Kyrgyzstan Tajikistan Türkiye Turkmenistan Uzbekistan	16-Oct-2017 - 16-Oct-2024	10,874,659	ONGOING
TCP/RER/3801	Strengthen the resilience of pine forest to bark beetle outbreaks and associated dieback in Belarus and Ukraine	Regional Belarus Ukraine	01-Aug-2020 - 31-Jul-2023	405,000	ONGOING
GCP/GLO/1100/USA-F	Forest Invasive Species Partnership	Global	10-Aug-2022 - 30-Jun-2024	100,000	ONGOING - GLOBAL

### III. Regional work programme development in FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia for the next biennium

12. FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31 articulates FAO's vision of a sustainable and food secure world for all, in the context of the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development. The four betters represent an organising principle for how FAO intends to contribute directly to SDG 1 (No poverty), SDG 2 (Zero hunger), and SDG 10 (Reduced inequalities) as well as to supporting achievement of the broader SDG agenda, which is crucial for attaining FAO's overall vision. The betters reflect the interconnected economic, social and environmental dimensions of agri-food systems. As such, they also encourage a strategic and systems-oriented approach within all FAO's interventions.

13. An overarching theme of the SDGs is to Leave No One Behind (LNOB), requiring global action to reach the poorest of the poor and fight inequality. FAO is uniquely positioned to play a role in achieving these goals, based on the close intersection of agriculture, rural areas, and poverty, and FAO's involvement in many cross-cutting interventions in these areas. Poverty reduction calls for a multidimensional and multisectoral approach, requiring a combined effort from all FAO divisions and offices to reduce poverty and achieve SDG 1.

14. Twenty Programme Priority Areas guide the programmes that FAO will implement under the four betters and respond directly to the issues and challenges emanating from the Corporate Strategic Foresight Exercise, the Regional Conferences, the Technical Committees, and other formal and informal consultation processes. They represent FAO's comparative advantage as a UN specialized agency in contributing to the 2030 Agenda, bringing together FAO's breadth and depth of technical expertise and knowledge.

15. At the regional level, the Regional Conference for Europe (ERC) continues to formulate regional positions on global policy and regulatory issues, advise on and identify specific problems of the European and Central Asia region as well as agrees on priorities of FAO's work in agriculture, fisheries and forestry in the Europe and Central Asia region. These agreed regional priorities are considered in the preparation of planning, programme and budget documents of the organization. The ERC at its 33rd Session in 2022<sup>5</sup> acknowledged the importance of the proposed revised priorities for the Region:

(a) Formulating effective policies, promoting digital innovation and facilitating rural livelihoods, with emphasis on smallholders, women and youth;

(b) Food system transformation and support in exploring new markets through the alignment of trade, food safety and sanitary and phytosanitary policies to meet WTO commitments and promote value chain development;

(c) Promoting sustainable natural resource management and facilitating resilience in agriculture, forestry and other land-use sectors, including mitigating and adapting to climate change; and

(d) Addressing food insecurity and reducing all forms of malnutrition.

16. As for the 2022-2023 programming, the three regional initiatives focusing on Empowering smallholders and family farms for improved rural livelihoods and poverty reduction (RI-1); on Improving agrifood trade and market integration (RI-2); as well as on Sustainable natural resource management under a changing climate (RI-3), are enabling the translation of the regional priorities into a regional programmatic framework. These regional priorities and initiatives are reflected in the FAO Programme of Work and Budget for the Region and ensure a programmatic approach in the implementation of country programmes, taking full account of the four aspirations, the PPAs, the accelerators as well as the cross-cutting themes (gender, youth, inclusion).

17. The Regional Initiatives also facilitate the development country demand driven CPFs in an integrated manner. From 2020 onwards, the CPFs are fully derived from the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) for a specific country

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<sup>5</sup> Report of the 33<sup>rd</sup> Regional Conference for Europe <https://www.fao.org/3/nj289en/nj289en.pdf>.



and define the agreed thematic areas and activities for cooperation between FAO and the respective Government.

18. As in the past, FAO's regional multi-disciplinary Programme of Work will be formulated in line with the respective CPF and in light of the regional priorities. Following internal iterative work planning process engaging Country Offices, Regional Office, HQ Offices and Technical Divisions, FAO's respective Regional Commissions (specifically on forestry, the European Forestry Commission) and Global Statutory Bodies (specifically on forestry, the Committee on Forestry) in coordination with the Office of Strategy, Programme and Budget, the Organization formulates its country and regional workplans. Following corporate review, the approved workplans inform endorsement of the biennial Programme of Work and Budget by FAO Council's session held in December preceding the first year of the new biennium.

#### **IV. Points for consideration**

19. The Commission may wish to encourage countries in the region to:

(a) More effectively incorporate integrated landscape approaches amongst various land management agencies responsible for agriculture, forestry, fisheries and livestock management into relevant national planning processes and enhance intersectoral collaboration at the landscape level;

(b) Require all formulators of country projects to integrate poverty considerations and conduct poverty analysis when designing projects, take advantage of entry points to address poverty, and ensure interventions are inclusive and Leave No One Behind.

(c) promote the sustainable production and consumption of NWFP by i) securing the conservation and sustainable supply of NWFP; ii) building competitive, equitable and sustainable value chains; iii) improving transparency, data and information flow on NWFP and iv) establishing enabling conditions in policy, financial and innovation terms;

(d) Provide financial and/or in-kind contributions to support the FAO regional forestry programmes, in particular on phytosanitary standards in forestry in the region, and FAO project work, in particular with view to providing complementary funding for GEF and GCF projects.

20. The Commission may wish to recommend FAO to:

(a) Strengthen the integration of incorporate integrated landscape approaches in operational forestry work in the region, as well as into existing and future REU Regional Initiatives, considering the multi-functional roles of forests;

(b) Integrate poverty considerations into the design and formulation of projects, in particular large project such as GEF and GCF, applying approaches such as poverty measurement, poverty profiles, poverty mapping, and poverty-based targeting;

(c) Continue to support natural resource management including forests through the harmonization and strengthening of national policy, financing, incentives, taxation and governance frameworks and measures, including regulations, standards and monitoring for forest management interventions and practices, and support capacity development in this regard;

(d) Continue supporting countries and other stakeholders, including the private sector, to promote coordinated action enhancing the sustainable production and consumption of NWFP, including capacity building related to the collection and dissemination of statistics on NWFP; and

(e) Continue to support the Forest Invasive Species Network for Europe and Central Asia (REUFIS) and its activities, in particular in organising topical trainings on emerging invasive species.

## Annex

### A. Countries and territories that requested technical assistance through project support from FAO to tackle country-specific challenges

#### 1. Armenia

1. The World Bank ranked Armenia among the top four Climate Change Vulnerable Countries in the Eastern Europe and Central Asia region with rural population heavily dependent on fuelwood for energy. After providing assistance to the Republic of Armenia in developing the Green Climate Fund (GCF) project “Forest resilience of Armenia, enhancing adaptation and rural green growth via mitigation (GCP/ARM/008/GCF)”, FAO started the project’s implementation in November 2021. The GCF project has three components, namely on forest restoration investments, on fuelwood consumption as main driver of forest degradation, and on rural communities’ involvement in forest governance and management. The total investment of this eight year project is USD 19 168 240 including a GCF grant of USD 10 000 000.

2. To complement the GCF funded activities the Austrian Development Agency (ADA) provides financial support for specific activities in all three components of the GCF project, in total USD 1 631 542 through a trust fund project implemented by FAO. The ADA funded project GCP/ARM/012/AUS “Forest resilience of Armenia, enhancing adaptation and rural green growth via mitigation” and the GCF project are implemented in parallel, namely between Nov 2021 – Nov 2029.

3. In addition, FAO through its Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP) complements activities of component 3 of the GCF project, namely through two TCP projects aiming at developing monitoring capacities of national institutions. Implementation of TCP/ARM/3807 “Assistance for establishing the National Forest Monitoring and Assessment System” started in January 2022, and of TCP/ARM/3904 “Assistance for effective field-level forest monitoring” in June 2023.

#### 2. Azerbaijan

4. Conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity: Strengthening Azerbaijan’s system of protected areas through improved governance and management project aims to strengthen the effectiveness of Azerbaijan’s protected area system to deliver Global Environmental Benefits, using a landscape approach to governance and management. Implementation period of the project is 2021-2025 with USD 2 639 726 from GEF 7.

#### 3. Bosnia and Herzegovina

5. Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) is rich in forest resources, 53 percent of its territory is covered by forests. Forests represent the key source of income for many small municipalities, as well as the key source of energy essential for livelihoods in rural areas. However, there is also the uneven use of forest areas due to presence or absence of forest road to access the resources, putting at risk the ecological sustainability of easily accessible forests. At the same time, good examples from abroad of making use of fast-growing species in plantation forests is widely ignored (less than 0,1 percent of the total area in BiH is plantation forests), and the implementation of a strategic approach to establishing plantation forests is absent despite their potential benefits in terms of reducing the pressure on natural forests to meet the demand for forest products (roundwood, fibre, fuelwood and non-wood forest products) wood and achieving multiple economic benefits in a period much shorter than in the case of natural forests. FAO provided technical assistance through a TCPf project to support Bosnia and Herzegovina to 1) undertake an assessment of potential locations for plantation forests, focusing on fast-growing tree species along rivers); and 2) prepare a database and guidelines for the establishment and management of plantation forests. The TCPf “Potentials of fast-growing plantation forests” (TCP/BIH/3802) with a budget of USD 63 000 is implemented between September 2021 and August 2023.

#### 4. Georgia

6. Georgia is a mountainous country in the western Caucasus with forest cover of over 40%, much more than any other country in Caucasus and Central Asia. The majority of the forest is mountain forest, rich in biodiversity and hosts a high level of endemism. Forests and other tree resources are of exceptional importance both in terms of the overall economy and livelihoods of the rural population and protection of the environment and biodiversity. FAO provides technical assistance on management of key forest pests and diseases such as red palm weevil (*Rhynchophorus ferrugineus*) Chestnut Blight (*Cryphonectria parasitica*) and Box Tree Moth (*Cydalima Perspectalis*) as well sustainable management of protected areas.

#### 5. Kyrgyzstan

7. In Kyrgyzstan, livestock is the most important source of income, the primary source of nutrition, and a financial safety net for the rural poor. Climate change and the poor management of natural resources have led to overgrazing, increased forest degradation, and serious land erosion. The GCF Project “Carbon Sequestration through Climate Investment in Forests and Rangelands in Kyrgyz Republic” will reduce the drivers of land degradation and the emissions this causes by supporting national institutions and promoting the participatory and ecosystem-based sustainable management of natural resources and green growth investments. The project includes the introduction of integrated rangeland and forestry resource planning and community-based investments in natural forest regeneration, sustainable forest management, afforestation and reforestation. The project will secure, mainstream and scale up the enabling environment for diversification, increase of efficiency and competitiveness reducing the dependency of communities on direct uses of resources (i.e., wood and pasture) and increasing their reliance on ecosystem services such as protection (reduced climate vulnerability), biodiversity and diversified livelihood opportunities. The implementation period of the project is 2021-2029 with USD 50 000 000 from the GCF and other co-financiers.

8. FAO developed a project under GEF 7 on development of a comprehensive legal framework on biosafety in accordance with the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety in Kyrgyzstan. The project PIF was approved on June 2021, expected GEF contribution is 1.5 million USD. The full-size project document preparation will be initiated soon.

#### 6. Kosovo<sup>6</sup>

9. Implementation of the FAO GCP project on “Support to strengthening sustainable and multipurpose forest management to improve rural livelihoods and address climate change in Kosovo- GCP/KOS/007/SWE” was initiated in 2020 with a 2.5 million USD from Sweden. To fill the funding gap the activities are further supported by an additional funding agreement with the EU (1.7 million USD) since 2022. The project aims to manage forests more efficiently using a multi-purpose approach, establish a good legal baseline for forest management, and support the forestry-based, gender-sensitive value-chains for poverty alleviation.

#### 7. Moldova

10. Forests of the Republic of Moldova are considered an important strategic natural and renewable resource with the potential to contribute to the national economic development. There has never been a nation-wide systematic forest inventory in the country, but adequate information on forests is critical for policy and decision making, FAO provides technical assistance to Moldova to develop the human and technical capacities, as well as to address institutional responsibilities for designing and implementing a state-of-the-art national forest inventory (NFI). The provided assistance includes the provision of preliminary land cover assessment to help design the first NFI. The TCPf “Developing the institutional capacity of the National Forestry Agency in the preparation of NFI” (TCP/MOL/3702) with a budget of USD 60 000 is implemented between May 2019 and Dec 2021.

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<sup>6</sup> References to Kosovo shall be understood in the context of United Nations Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

11. However, the fragmentation of forest resources and their uneven distribution across the country is making it difficult to address the challenge of climate change, enhance living conditions for the population and provide wood and non-wood products without putting at risk the biodiversity conservation and carbon sequestration potential of the forest sector. Aiming at improving the situation, the Government set the goal to increase forested areas up to 15 percent of the total land area by 2020 and to improve at the same time the condition of the existing severely degraded forests. However, the progress towards this end is slow due to limited technical and institutional capacities in the country. FAO responded positively to the request of the Government of Moldova to support the country in developing a larger-scale forest and landscape restoration project to be submitted to the GCF. The TCP “Formulation of a GCF project proposal on climate change adaptation and mitigation in forestry” (TCP/MOL/3806) with a budget of USD 325 000 is implemented between January 2022 and December 2023.

## **8. Montenegro**

12. Montenegro’s land area is characterised by a high forest cover of 59.9% and an additional 9.9 % of other wooded land according to the results of the National Forest Inventory (NFI) in 2010. During the last decade the share of privately-owned forests in Montenegro increased to 50.4% from 47.6% in 2010 due to denationalization as well as overgrowth of private agricultural lands with trees, while the share of state-owned forests decreased to 49.6% of total forests. A large part of private forests is of coppice origin with only a low share of good quality trees. Inadequate penal policy in relation to poor management of forests, and the unwillingness of concessionaires to comply with contractual obligations further contribute to the poor condition of private-owned forests. But also in state-owned forests, the biggest shortcomings of the existing concession model are the non-fulfilment of contractual obligations, namely to pay concession fees, to follow the felling plans, as well as to implement the measures stipulated by the forest management system and plans. While the government has prepared amendments to the Law on Forests to resolve the mentioned issues, forest managers often lack the necessary knowledge and skills to put new concepts into practice. FAO is providing direct technical support to private forest owners to develop and implement forest management plans through the TCP project “Technical Assistance for Sustainable Forest Management” (TCP/MNE/ 745169) which started in September 2023.

## **9. North Macedonia**

13. The forest fires in North Macedonia destroyed an average of 0.6 percent of the forest area annually from 2010 to 2018, mainly due to human factors. There were two pronounced peaks, in 2012 (with 19 000 hectares or 2 percent of burned forest area) and 2017 (with 13 000 hectares or 1.3 percent of the country’s forest area). This calls for the Government to make strong and long-term strategic investments to address the issue, along with afforestation challenges. The afforestation trend both on state and private lands has significantly decreased from 2 970 hectares in 2010 to 960 hectares in 2018. Only extinguishing forest fires by the Public Enterprise for “National Forests” (PENF) is reported, with no restoration measures in the fire-damaged forests.

14. FAO is providing support through the TCP project “Technical Assistance for strengthening the national capacity of the forest service “ (TCP/MCD/3903) to a) improve data collection on forest damage; b) build capacities on afforestation and forest restoration; and c) assist in resource mobilization for restoration and afforestation activities. The project started in 15 July 2023 and will end in 31 December 2024.

## **8. Serbia**

15. The Forest Law and Law on Nature Protection provide the main legal framework for forest conservation and management in the Republic of Serbia. The Forestry Development Strategy sets the operational framework for forest development and planning, defining conservation and improvement of biodiversity as a part of the concept of sustainable forest management (SFM). FAO together with national stakeholders developed a GEF project addressing barriers for applying SFM throughout Serbia. The project aimed at (i) setting up

a Forest Information System and implementing the second NFI in Serbia; (ii) strengthening coordination and dialogue between public and private stakeholders, (iii) strengthening capacities to implement SFM practices; (iv) designing incentive mechanisms for private forest owners to engage in SFM, and (v) implement new approaches in forest management planning and implementation in two pilot regions. The total financing of the project “Contribution of sustainable forest management to a low emission and resilient development in Serbia” (GCP/SRB/002/GFF) amounted to USD 29 454 799, with GEF contribution of USD 3 274 658, and was successfully implemented between January 2018 and June 2023.

16. Under the GEF7 programme FAO and national counterparts developed a follow-up project “Enabling environment at policy, field and market levels for Forest Landscape Restoration (FLR) to achieve Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) in Serbia”. Total financing from the country’s GEF7 allocation amounts to USD 746 121. The project’s implementation started in April 2022 and will last until March 2025.

17. Upon request by the Government, FAO furthermore provided technical assistance to the Republic of Serbia through a TCPf project (TCP/ SRB/3801, finished) to undertake pre-feasibility studies in relation to the climate change adaptation and mitigation potential of the forest sector and to eventually develop a GCF project proposal. With further technical support from FAO through TCPf “Enhancing the resilience of Serbian forests and their carbon storage potential” (TCP/ SRB/3902) with a budget of USD 77 000 a Full Funding GCF proposal has been developed between September 2022 and September 2023 which recently has been submitted for review to the GCF secretariat and eventual approval by the GCF board. The total investment of this seven year Full Funding Proposal is about USD 85 700 000 including a GCF grant of USD 25 000 000.

## 9. Türkiye

18. Biodiversity conservation and sustainable forest management in Kaz Daglari project aims to improve biodiversity conservation and sustainable forest management in the Kaz Daglari region in Türkiye through protected areas and mainstreaming biodiversity conservation into production landscapes for environmental and socio-economic benefits. Implementation period of the project is 2022-2027 with USD 4 657 534 from GEF 7.

19. Post-Fire Restoration Activities of Forest and Maquis Ecosystems in Mugla Province” project aims to develop guidelines on species restoration, mainly for selected rare flora and fauna elements in forest and maquis ecosystems affected by forest fires in Türkiye. Implementation period of the project is 2022-2024 with USD 55 000 from TCPf.

20. Enhancing the Capacity of the Turkish International Forestry Training Centre” project aims to increase the capacity of the existing International Forestry Training Centre, currently focusing on forest fire management, by enriching its training curricula, by developing its human resources as well as its training infrastructures, to meet the required standards of an international training centre, and by piloting some training activities. The implementation period of the project is 2023-2026 with UDS 1 000 000 from FAO-Türkiye Forestry Programme.

## 10. Ukraine

21. The promotion of restoration of degraded landscapes in the forest-steppe and steppe zones is one of the priorities in Ukraine. The FAO together with national stakeholders developed and implements a GEF project which aims at 1) creating an enabling environment for integrated natural resources management (INRM) practices; 2) restoring productivity and resilience of production landscapes through INRM; and 3) learning and sharing of lessons learned. Component 2 comprises developing capacities for improved management of shelterbelts, coupled with field demonstrations of rehabilitation and multipurpose management (erosion control, carbon sequestration, non-wood forest products). The total financing of the project “Integrated Natural Resources Management in Degraded Landscapes in the Forest-Steppe and Steppe Zones of Ukraine” (GCP/UKR/004/GFF) amounts to USD 12 099 751, with GEF contribution of USD 1 776 484 (component 2 about 60%), and is implemented between November 2017 and July 2020.

22. The implementation of the forestry component of the FAO EU program in Ukraine (Support to Agricultural and Food Policy Implementation/Europeaid/137-136/DH/SER/UA) was initiated in 2021. Total funding for the forestry component is about USD 600 000. The project implementation was interrupted in 2022-2023 and the project is reinitiated in the third quarter of the 2023. The forestry component of the program aims to strengthen enabling environment for the forestry sector to help secure the long-term sustainability of forest management and to improve evidence-based policymaking in the sector.

#### **11. Uzbekistan**

23. Sustainable management of forests in mountain and valley areas project aims to introduce sustainable forest management and improved status of forest and tree resources. Implementation period of the project is 2018-2025 with USD 3 187 023 from GEF6.

### **B. Technical assistance through subregional project support from FAO to tackle challenges common to a number of countries**

24. Both Belarus and Ukraine have great potential for forestry development, however, there are new emerging threats associated with extreme weather events. Natural disturbances such as severe and protracted drought, combined with poor silvicultural practises cause limited water and nutrition availability. As a consequence, on thousands of hectares conifer trees have become stressed and susceptible to bark beetle attacks reaching severe outbreak levels. Due to the limited institutional capacities in forest health at national level, the governments of Belarus and Ukraine requested technical assistance from FAO with the aim of “Strengthening the resilience of pine forest to bark beetle outbreaks and associated dieback” (TCP/RER/3801) with a budget of USD 405 000 was implemented from 01 Aug 2020 to 31 July 2023.

25. Forest Restoration Improvement for Environmental Development and Sustainability in Central Asia – FRIENDS project aims to develop national capacities to successfully conduct large-scale forest and other wooded lands restoration, by enhancing know-how to prevent degradation. The implementation period of the project is 2022-2025 with UDS 2 000 000 from FAO-Türkiye Forestry Programme.

26. Improving Biodiversity and Sustainable Forestry project aims to equip Central Asian countries, through regional cooperation and networking, with the necessary and gender-responsive capacity and knowledge on sustainable biodiversity conservation and sustainable forest management. The implementation period of the project is 2023-2026 with UDS 3 299 962 from FAO-Türkiye Forestry Programme.

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